



NUNC COGNOSCO EX PARTE



TRENT UNIVERSITY  
LIBRARY

MAR 28 1990

A faint, light gray watermark of classical columns is visible in the background of the page.

Digitized by the Internet Archive  
in 2019 with funding from  
Kahle/Austin Foundation

<https://archive.org/details/miltononcontinen0000byse>









# MILTON ON THE CONTINENT

A KEY

TO

*L'ALLEGRO AND IL PENSERO*

WITH SEVERAL ILLUSTRATIONS, A HISTORICAL  
CHART, AND AN ORIGINAL PORTRAIT  
OF GALILEO

BY

MRS. FANNY BYSE  
(*Née Lee*)

LONDON  
ELLIOT STOCK, 62, PATERNOSTER ROW, E.C.  
LAUSANNE: ROUSSY'S ENGLISH LIBRARY

1903



THIS FRUIT OF MANY YEARS

I Dedicate

TO THE MEMORY OF MY MATERNAL UNCLE

ERNEST ELLABY, M.A.

FELLOW OF WADHAM COLLEGE, OXFORD

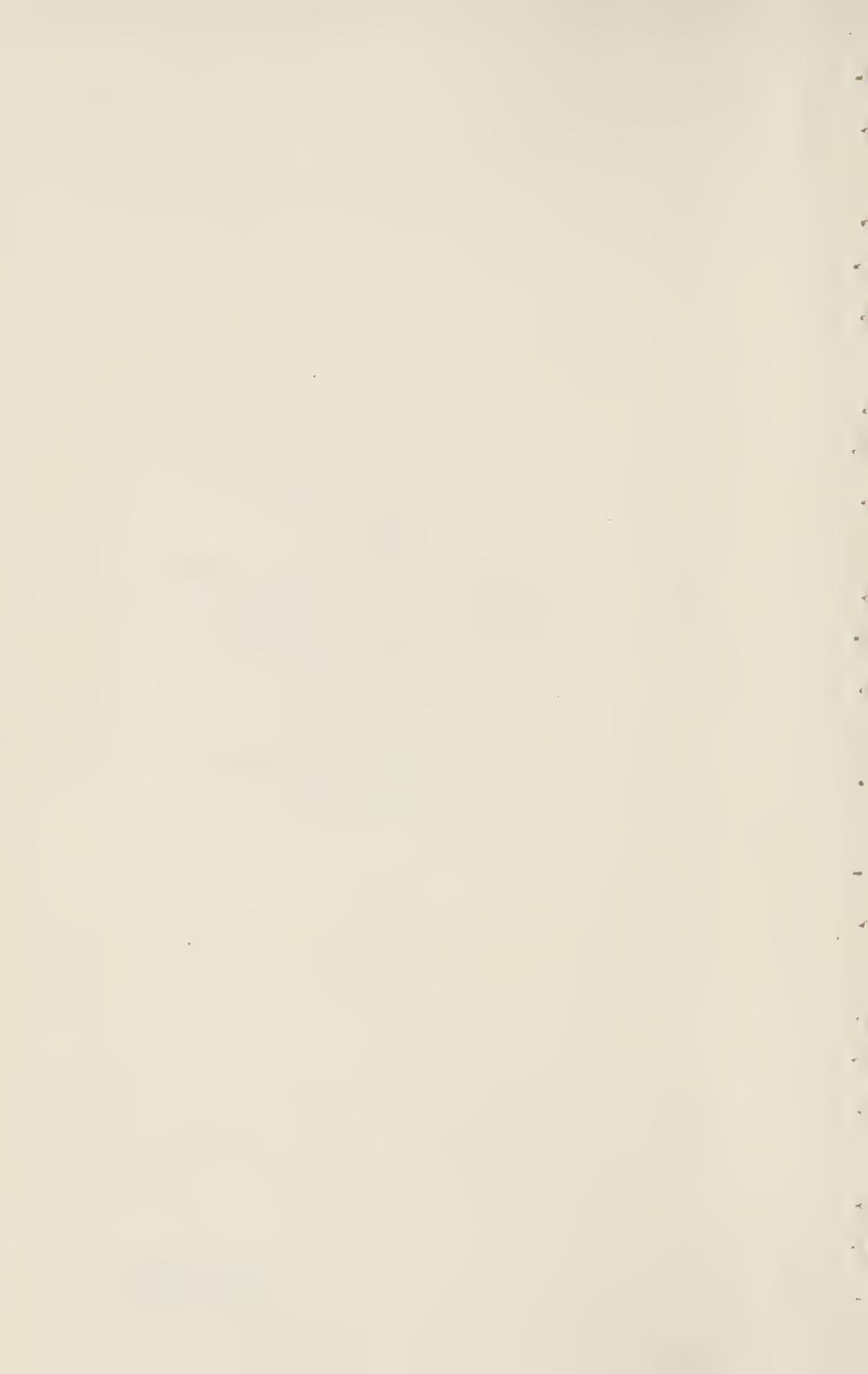
WHO IN EARLY DAYS

TAUGHT ME TO WANDER

BY SHADY GROVE OR SUNNY HILL

WITH HIS BELOVED BARD

87566



# CONTENTS

	PAGE
PREFACE -	xi
TEXT OF THE TWIN POEMS (MR. BEECHAM'S):	
L'ALLEGRO -	15
IL PENSERO SO -	20

## CHAPTER I

### MILTON IN PARIS

Milton in the Paris of 1638, 26—Wit and Arms, 31—Anne Geneviève de Bourbon, 33—Hôtel de Rambouillet, 35—Benserade and Voiture, 36

## CHAPTER II

### MILTON IN ITALY

Milton in Italy, 38—Michael Angelo's *Il Pensero so*, 39—Hermes Trismegistos, 42—The Pensive Nun, 44—Neoplatonism, 46—Leonora Baroni, 47—Frescobaldi, Organist of St. Peter's, 50

## CHAPTER III

### MILTON ON THE SIMPLON PASS

The Roaming Whimsey, 53—Rocks hung in Air, 53—Legend of the Rosminians, 54—The Simplon, 56—Ebon Shades of Gondo, 57—The Amphitheatre of the New Pleasures, 59—La Dent du Midi, 60

## CHAPTER IV

## BEX AND LA TOUR DE DUIN

Bex-les-Bains and its Old Tower, 62—Labouring Clouds, 63—Towers and Battlements, 63—Upland Hamlets, 65—The Swiss Mi-été, 66—The Drudging Goblin, 67

## CHAPTER V

## DOES THE KEY FIT?

Preface of the Stationer Moseley, 71—Contents of Poemata edited in 1645, 72—English Chauvinism, 72—The Turning-point in his Writings, 73—Milton's Fireside Memories, 74—Last Notes of the Doric Quill, 75—Conclusion, 76

## PREFACE

MOST critics of Milton's poetry are unanimous in representing the Twin Poems as fantastic and unreal. Dr. Masson says: 'The scenery of Horton furnishes no original for

'Mountains, on whose barren breast  
The labouring clouds do often rest.'

Mr. J. R. Green, in his 'History of the English People,' writing of *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* as first results of the poet's retirement at Horton, accuses him (p. 510) of 'a want of precision and exactness, even in his picturesque touches.'

Mr. H. B. Cotterill, in his learned and fascinating little volume, 'Milton's "Lycidas,"' is surprised that 'he left scarce any record of the impression made on him by the literary societies and art treasures of Florence.' He calls Milton's pictures in the Twins 'made-up pictures—seen through student spectacles.' Yet Mr. Cotterill\* does not agree with Dr. Masson that these pictures were painted in order to call up visions on our mind by the 'intimation' of some picturesque epithet or by some suggestion of scenes

\* Mr. Cotterill explains (note on line 143 in his *Lycidas*) the word 'tufted' as giving the idea of a plant with much-branched stem and a clustering mass of foliage. This sense is what exactly describes the foliage up to the Tour de Duin—the 'tufted trees' of *L'Allegro*.

described by other poets. Indeed, he comes to meet me halfway in my realistic interpretation of the whole by adding that Milton sketches with a few graphic touches the actual scenes as he himself saw them—like a painter in water-colours ; and he considers them as exquisitely drawn. My object is to show the living models of those scenes by giving up the date 1633, and placing the poems nearer to the date of their publication (1645).

With no pretence to emulate the erudition of these writer sand a crowd of others—Mr. Stopford Brooke and Mr. Henry Morley were my professors, Ruskin ever had my deep reverence—I approached this special subject quite from the other side, the side of experience. I lived for five years in Bex. There, morning after morning, I saw the rounded hill of the Tour de Duin, with its ‘tufted trees.’ I played with my children that this was Milton’s tower, without having the faintest idea that he might have passed the Simplon.

Seven years later, returning to Bex and opening my hotel window, it occurred to me that the description, not only of the ‘towers and battlements,’ but of the whole scene of the ‘new pleasures,’ was remarkably applicable to the panorama of Bex.

I therefore began the research, with no view to contradict learned critics, but as a pure lover and follower of the truth-seeking Milton.

Mr. Cotterill’s memory, he tells us (p. 40), has been haunted for nearly half a century with the majestic ocean-music of Milton’s *Hymn on the Morning of Christ’s Nativity* —haunted by visions that were called up in his childish and uncritical mind by many of its imaginative passages.

For nearly forty years I, too, have been haunted in the same way by the Twin Poems. They have been woven like a running thread of silver into my life since the time

when, at fourteen, ignoring the art of drawing, I painted in glowing colours *L'Allegro* with his merry train, and *Il Penseroso* under the moonlight.

After mature reflection, I am inclined to believe that *L'Allegro* was written first—it is richer in imagery—and *Il Penseroso* written afterwards to match, as an echo, fainter, though perhaps more charming. Both may have seen the light and been christened in Italy, even if they were completed only in the house in St. Bride's Churchyard, where Professor Masson sees ‘the books on the poet's table in the winter evenings’—before having the worry of his two nephews' education, let us hope.

It has been suggested that Milton was too opposed to the Church of England to have introduced a cathedral into a piece written later than 1633. But in *Lycidas* had he not already called the clergy ‘blind mouths?’ His comprehensive mind might unite all images of happiness in *L'Allegro*, even if he did not approve of all. He did not approve of the loves of Bacchus—even the ‘spicy nut-brown ale’ was no ideal of his—yet they are in *L'Allegro*. Did he advocate the morals of Saturn's reign, or fasting, or false gods? Did he believe in the demonology of Plato? If, then, he seems to approve cathedral choirs and the hairy gown of the hermit, these must only be taken decoratively; the object is to group together merry images or sad ones, not to preach polemics.

Neither do I think, with Mr. Stopford Brooke, that political allegories are to be sought in *Comus*. The lady will not drink the wine of Circe; she has courage never to submit or yield. Her mind is its own place. She stands faithful among the faithless; nor number nor example can make her swerve from truth, nor change her constant mind, though single.

Milton's strong faith in the dignity of human liberty makes *Comus* a work of all time, stretching far beyond the

wranglings of the reign of Charles I. That early faith is embodied in the lines :

'Mortals that would follow me,  
Love Virtue ; she alone is free :  
She can teach you how to climb  
Higher than the sphery chime ;  
Or, if Virtue feeble were,  
Heaven itself would stoop to her.'

Like Comus, the Twin Poems are simpler and more beautiful without preconceived ideas.

## TEXT OF THE TWIN POEMS

(MR. BEECHAM'S)

### L'ALLEGRO

H ENCE loathed Melancholy  
Of *Cerberus*, and blackest midnight born,  
In *Stygian* Cave forlorn  
'Mongst horrid shapes, and shreiks, and sights unholy,  
Find out som uncouth cell,  
Where brooding darknes spreads his jealous wings,  
And the night-Raven sings ;  
There under *Ebon* shades, and low-brow'd Rocks,  
As ragged as thy Locks,  
In dark *Cimmerian* desert ever dwell.  
But com thou Goddes fair and free,  
In Heav'n ycleap'd *Euphrosyne*,  
And by men, heart-easing Mirth,  
Whom lovely *Venus* at a birth  
With two sister Graces more  
To Ivy-crowned *Bacchus* bore ;  
Or whether (as som Sager sing)  
The frolick Wind that breathes the Spring,  
*Zephir* with *Aurora* playing,  
As he met her once a Maying,

There on Beds of Violets blew,  
And fresh-blown Roses washt in dew,  
Fill'd her with thee a daughter fair,  
So bucksom, blith, and debonair.  
Haste thee nymph, and bring with thee  
Jest and youthful Jollity,  
Quips and Cranks, and wanton Wiles,  
Nods, and Becks, and Wreathed Smiles,  
Such as hang on *Hebe's* cheek,  
And love to live in dimple sleek ;  
Sport that wrinclèd Care derides,  
And Laughter holding both his sides.  
Com, and trip it as ye\* go  
On the light fantastick toe,  
And in thy right hand lead with thee,  
The Mountain Nymph, sweet Liberty ;  
And if I give thee honour due,  
Mirth, admit me of thy crue  
To live with her, and live with thee,  
In unreproved pleasures free ;  
To hear the Lark begin his flight,  
And singing startle the dull night,  
From his watch-towre in the skies,  
Till the dappled dawn doth rise ;  
Then to com in spight of sorrow,  
And at my window bid good morrow,  
Through the Sweet-Briar, or the Vine,  
Or the twisted Eglantine.  
While the Cock with lively din,  
Scatters the rear of darknes thin,  
And to the stack, or the Barn dore,  
Stoutly struts his Dames before,

\* You (1673).

Oft list'ning how the Hounds and horn  
Clearly rouse the slumbering morn,  
From the side of som Hoar Hill,  
Through the high wood echoing shrill.  
Som time walking not unseen  
By Hedge-row Elms, on Hillocks green,  
Right against the Eastern gate,  
Wher the great Sun begins his state,  
Rob'd in flames, and Amber light,  
The clouds in thousand Liveries dight.  
While the Plowman neer at hand,  
Whistles ore the Furrow'd Land,  
And the Milkmaid singeth blithe,  
And the Mower whets his sithe,  
And every Shepherd tells his tale  
Under the Hawthorn in the dale.  
Streit mine eye hath caught new pleasures  
Whilst the Lantskip round it measures,  
Russet Lawns, and Fallows Gray,  
Where the nibling flocks do stray,  
Mountains on whose barren brest  
The labouring clouds do often rest :  
Meadows trim with Daisies pide,  
Shallow Brooks, and Rivers wide.  
Towers, and Battlements it sees  
Boosom'd high in tufted Trees,  
Wher perhaps som beauty lies,  
The Cynosure of neighbouring eyes.  
Hard by, a Cottage chimney smokes,  
From betwixt two aged Okes,  
Where *Corydon* and *Thyrsis* met,  
Are at their savory dinner set  
Of Hearbs, and other Country Messes,  
Which the neat-handed *Phillis* dresses ;

And then in haste her Bowre she leaves,  
With *Thesstylis* to bind the Sheaves ;  
Or if the earlier season lead  
To the tann'd Haycock in the Mead,  
Som times with secure delight  
The up-land Hamlets will invite,  
When the merry Bells ring round,  
And the jocond rebecks sound  
To many a youth, and many a maid,  
Dancing in the Chequer'd shade ;  
And young and old com forth to play  
On a Sunshine Holyday,  
Till the live-long day-light fail,  
Then to the Spicy Nut-brown Ale,  
With stories told of many afeat,  
How *Faery Mab* the junkets eat,  
She was pincht, and pull'd she sed,  
And he by\* Friars Lanthorn led  
Tells how the drudging *Goblin* swet,  
To ern his Cream-bowle duly set,  
When in one night, ere glimps of morn,  
His shadowy Flale hath thresh'd the Corn  
That ten day-labourers could not end,  
Then lies him down the Lubbar Fend,  
And stretch'd out all the Chimney's length,  
Basks at the fire his hairy strength ;  
And Crop-full out of dores he flings,  
Ere the first Cock his Mattin rings.  
Thus don the Tales, to bed they creep,  
By whispering Windes soon lull'd asleep.  
Towred Cities please us then,  
And the busie humm of men,

\* And by the (1673).

Where throngs of Knights and Barons bold,  
In weeds of Peace high triumphs hold,  
With store of Ladies, whose bright eies  
Rain influence, and judge the prise  
Of Wit, or Arms, while both contend  
To win her Grace, whom all commend.  
There let *Hymen* oft appear  
In Saffron robe, with Taper clear,  
And pomp, and feast, and revelry,  
With mask, and antique Pageantry,  
Such sights as youthfull Poets dream  
On Summer eves by haunted stream.  
Then to the well-trod stage anon,  
*If Jonsons* learned Sock be on,  
Or sweetest *Shakespear* fancies childe,  
Warble his native Wood-notes wilde,  
And ever against eating Cares,  
Lap me in soft *Lydian* Aires,  
Married to immortal verse  
Such as the meeting soul may pierce  
In notes, with many a winding bout  
Of lincked sweetnes long drawn out,  
With wanton heed, and giddy cunning,  
The melting voice through mazes running ;  
Untwisting all the chains that ty  
The hidden soul of harmony.  
That *Orpheus* self may heave his head  
From golden slumber on a bed  
Of heapt *Elysian* flowres, and hear  
Such streins as would have won the ear  
Of *Pluto*, to have quite set free  
His half regain'd *Eurydice*.  
These delights, if thou canst give,  
Mirth with thee, I mean to live.

## IL PENSERO

H ENCE vain deluding joyes,  
The brood of folly without father bred,  
How little you bested,  
Or fill the fixed mind with all your toyes ;  
Dwell in som idle brain,  
And fancies fond with gaudy shapes possess,  
As thick and numberless  
As the gay motes that people the Sun Beams.  
Or likest hovering dreams  
The fickle Pensioners of *Morpheus* train.  
But hail thou Goddes, sage and holy,  
Hail divinest Melancholy,  
Whose Saintly visage is too bright  
To hit the Sense of human sight ;  
And therfore to our weaker view,  
Ore laid with black staid Wisdoms hue.  
Black, but such as in esteem,  
Prince *Memnons* sister might beseem,  
Or that Starr'd *Ethiope* Queen that strove  
To set her beauties praise above  
The Sea Nymphs, and their powers offended.  
Yet thou art higher far descended,  
Thee bright-hair'd *Vesta* long of yore,  
To solitary *Saturn* bore ;

His daughter she (in *Saturns* raign,  
Such mixture was not held a stain)  
Oft in glimmering Bowres, and glades  
He met her, and in secret shades  
Of woody *Ida's* inmost grove,  
While yet there was no fear of *Jove*.  
Com pensive Nun, devout and pure,  
Sober, stedfast, and demure,  
All in a robe of darkest grain,  
Flowing with majestick train,  
And sable stole of *Cipres* Lawn,  
Over thy decent shoulders drawn.  
Com, but keep thy wonted state,  
With eev'n step, and musing gate,  
And looks commercing with the skies,  
Thy rapt soul sitting in thine eyes :  
There held in holy passion still,  
Forget thy self to Marble, till  
With a sad Leaden downward cast,  
Thou fix them on the earth as fast.  
And joyn with thee calm Peace, and Quiet,  
Spare Fast that oft with gods doth diet,  
And hears the Muses in a ring,  
Ay round about *Joves* Altar sing.  
And adde to these retired Leisure,  
That in trim Gardens takes his pleasure ;  
But first, and chiefest, with thee bring,  
Him that yon soars on golden wing,  
Guiding the fiery-wheeled throne,  
The Cherub Contemplation,  
And the mute Silence hist along,  
'Less *Philomel* will daign a Song,  
In her sweetest, saddest plight,  
Smoothing the rugged brow of night,

While *Cynthia* checks her Dragon yoke,  
Gently o're th'accustom'd Oke ;  
Sweet Bird that shunn'st the noise of folly,  
Most musicall, most melancholy !  
Thee Chauntress oft the Woods among,  
I woo to hear thy eeven-Song ;  
And missing thee, I walk unseen  
On the dry smooth-shaven Green,  
To behold the wandring Moon,  
Riding neer her highest noon,  
Like one that had bin led astray  
Through the Heav'ns wide pathles way ;  
And oft, as if her head she bow'd,  
Stooping through a fleecy cloud.  
Oft on a Plat of rising ground,  
I hear the far-off *Curfeu* sound,  
Over som wide-water'd shoar,  
Swinging slow with sullen roar ;  
Or if the Ayr will not permit,  
Som still removed place will fit,  
Where glowing Embers through the room  
Teach light to counterfeit a gloom,  
Far from all resort of mirth,  
Save the Cricket on the hearth,  
Or the Belmans drousie charm,  
To bless the dores from nightly harm :  
Or let my Lamp at midnight hour,  
Be seen in som high lonely Towr,  
Where I may oft out-watch the *Bear*,  
With thrice great *Hermes*, or unspear  
The spirit of *Plato* to unfold  
What Worlds, or what vast Regions hold  
The immortal mind that hath forsook  
Her mansion in this fleshly nook :

And of those *Dæmons* that are found  
In fire, air, flood, or under ground,  
Whose power hath a true consent  
With Planet, or with Element.  
Som time let Gorgeous Tragedy  
In Scepter'd Pall com sweeping by,  
Presenting *Thebs*, or *Pelops* line,  
Or the tale of *Troy* divine.  
Or what (though rare) of later age,  
Ennobled hath the Buskind stage.  
But, O sad Virgin, that thy power  
Might raise *Museus* from his bower,  
Or bid the soul of *Orpheus* sing  
Such notes as warbled to the string,  
Drew Iron tears down *Pluto's* cheek,  
And made Hell grant what Love did seek.  
Or call up him that left half told  
The story of *Cambuscan* bold,  
Of *Camball*, and of *Algarsife*,  
And who had *Canace* to wife,  
That own'd the vertuous Ring and Glass,  
And of the wondrous Hors of Brass,  
On which the *Tartar* King did ride ;  
And if ought els, great *Bards* beside,  
In sage and solemn tunes have sung,  
Of Turneys and of Trophies hung ;  
Of Forests, and enchantments drear,  
Where more is meant then meets the ear.  
Thus night oft see me in thy pale career,  
Till civil-suited Morn appeer,  
Not trickt and frounc't as she was wont,  
With the Attick Boy to hunt,  
But Cherchef't in a comly Cloud.  
While rocking Winds are Piping loud,

Or usher'd with a shower still,  
When the gust hath blown his fill,  
Ending on the russling Leaves,  
With minute drops from off the Eaves.  
And when the Sun begins to fling  
His flaring beams, me Goddes bring  
To arched walks of twilight groves,  
And shadows brown that *Sylvan* ioves  
Of Pine, or monumental Oake,  
Where the rude Ax with heaved stroke,  
Was never heard the Nymphs to daunt,  
Or fright them from their hallow'd haunt.  
There in close covert by som Brook,  
Where no profaner eye may look,  
Hide me from Day's garish eie,  
While the Bee with Honied thie,  
That at her flowry work doth sing,  
And the Waters murmuring  
With such consort as they keep,  
Entice the dewy-feather'd Sleep ;  
And let som strange mysterious dream,  
Wave at his Wings in Airy stream,  
Of lively portrature display'd,  
Softly on my eye-lids laid.  
And as I wake, sweet musick breath,  
Abovē, about, or underneath,  
Sent by som spirit to mortals good,  
Or th'unseen Genius of the Wood.  
But let my due feet never fail,  
To walk the studious Cloysters pale,  
And love the high embowed Roof,  
With antick Pillars massy proof,  
And storied Windows richly dight,  
Casting a dimm religious light.

There let the pealing Organ blow,  
To the full voic'd Quire below,  
In Service high, and Anthems clear,  
As may with sweetnes, through mine ear,  
Dissolve me into extasies,  
And bring all Heav'n before mine eyes.  
And may at last my weary age  
Find out the peacefull hermitage,  
The Hairy Gown and Mossy Cell,  
Where I may sit and rightly spell  
Of every Star that Heav'n doth shew,  
And every Herb that sips the dew ;  
Till old experience do attain  
To something like Prophetic strain.  
These pleasures *Melancholy* give,  
And I with thee will choose to live.

## CHAPTER I

### MILTON IN PARIS

A TOWER of the twelfth century, solitary remnant of a castle\* ruined in the wars of Burgundy, still stands on a round wooded hill overlooking the village of Bex. The hill prolongs itself in graceful declivities, forming one wide amphitheatre westward, till the abrupt fall of the land on St. Maurice,

' . . . where the swift Rhone cleaves his way between Heights which appear as lovers who have parted.'

The 'heights' are the Dent du Midi, who bears on her bosom so many zones, in whose skirts the old abbey nestles, and the Dent de Morcles, her rival, on the right bank of the river.

\* See 'Dictionnaire historique du Canton de Vaud,' par Martignier et de Crousaz, p. 87, etc., and F. de Gingins, 'Développement de l'Indépendance du Haut-Valais.' In 1475, just before the wars of Burgundy, Charles the Bold brought over paid troops from Lombardy by the St. Bernard, to join his army in Francie-Comté. The Bernese, alarmed, came over by Gsteig and les Ormonts to Aigle. Next year, after the celebrated battle of Grandson, the men of Berne with les Ormonens attacked the Vaudois population. It was in these expeditions that the Bernese destroyed the towers of Duin or Duyn, of St. Triphon and of Aigremont. Milton, seeing the Tower of Duin, with its ruined battlements, recalls to mind the story of the fair lady of Aigremont. To complete the picture, see further on. Worse vandals have lately restored the castle, changed its form, and made it into a temperance café.

These, we suggest, were the 'mountains' alluded to by Milton in *L'Allegro*, a feature for which, writes Professor Masson, 'the scenery of Horton furnishes no original.'

'Mountains on whose barren breast  
The labouring clouds do often rest.'

And the Tour de Duin, whose battlements are still visible, half hidden among chestnut-trees and ivy, is one of those 'towers and battlements' which the poet's eye sees 'bosom'd high in tufted trees.' Professor David Masson writes, in his admirable 'Life of Milton,' referring to the early pieces, *Comus*, *Lycidas*, *To the Nightingale*, *L'Allegro*, *Il Penseroso*, *Arcades*: '*Comus*, the most important, is certainly known to be of the year 1634, and that the other pieces preceded it is a matter of most probable inference.'

We venture to suggest that *L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* were not written during Milton's youth at Horton; that, on the contrary, they are rife with rich souvenirs of Continental travel. Dr. Masson, we hope, will allow us to lay aside his 'probable inference' that they were written during the Horton period, as there are no proofs of the assertion. We have studied the whole matter long and carefully, on the Continent and in the light of French history, and possess such an arch of evidence as to bridge over the two and a half centuries which separate us from the publication of these poems (1645) with somewhat more than 'probable inference.' The beauty of the Twin Poems is increased in an extraordinary degree when we see in them the realism of Milton. In spite of the metaphysical lore which is the soil where his poems grow, they are ever true to Nature—in a word, *vécus*.

Milton travelled to Paris and Italy in 1638-39, for a tour of fifteen months. It was three years after the foundation of the French Academy that he visited Paris 'for intellectual

purposes'; and, to those who have read his biography by Dr. Masson, there is no doubt that he frequented the first society.

Now, as knowledge builds the forts of her progressive conquest over the world, many regions are brought from the metaphysical to the positive stage. To what extent, we may ask, are readers of Milton retained in the metaphysical stage with regard to his poetry? We allude chiefly to the Twin Poems, *Il Penseroso* and *L'Allegro*, which manuals of English literature and biographies of Milton attribute invariably to a period of his life when he could not have gone through what he describes.

We wish to suggest that the Twin Poems on Melancholy and Mirth contain unmistakable proofs of having been written during the poet's foreign tour, or on his return to London after it. Instead of a dreamy, meaningless sentimentality, we see in these gems of our literature a fine mosaic of his experiences in Paris, in Italy, and in Switzerland. English scenery, English women, English Church music, could not have inspired, in the earlier half of the seventeenth century, what his acute power of perception and expression, and his accurate memory, brought back from the charms of Geneviève de Bourbon, from the music of Italy, from his communion with the aged Galileo, and from the terrors of the Alpine pass.

It is sometimes assumed that the truly scientific spirit is a growth of our own day; the realistic school of painting aims to be modern. But that which is real and permanent has at all times been true to Nature.

Milton had enormous imaginative power, but it did not tend to blind his keen observation. All he wrote in those poems meant something to him, and something that had touched him with true feeling—mirth, joy, sorrow: now the comfort of the English homestead, now the uncouth

heights and depths of the Alpine gorges, now the captive Galileo, with the ‘pensive nun,’ his daughter. Looked at as a record of his travels, those poems form an admirably true picture of the history of his time, and of the places and persons who came across his path.

As a proof of Milton’s accuracy in observing the individual character of natural objects, we need only recall to memory his lines on the rivers of England. Each one has its special and appropriate epithet :

‘Rivers, arise; whether thou be the son  
Of utmost Tweed or Ouse, or gulphy Dun,  
Or Trent, who, like some earth-born giant, spreads  
His thirty arms along the indented meads;  
Or sullen Mole, that runneth underneath;  
Or Severn swift, guilty of maiden’s death;  
Or rocky Avon, or of sedgy Lee,  
Or coaly Tyne, or ancient hallowed Dee;  
Or Humber loud, that keeps the Scythian’s name,  
Or Medway smooth, or royal-tower’d Thame.’

Milton became M.A. of Oxford in 1635; in 1636 the plague carried away many lives. Ben Jonson died of it. Milton’s friend Edward King was drowned off the coast of Anglesea. *Lycidas*, the elegy on the death of this young and faithful fellow-servant of Truth, exists in the poet’s handwriting in the Cambridge MS. dated November, 1637. The closing words of this very graceful lament show his earnest desire to travel, a desire which four months later was satisfied :

‘At last he rose and twitch’d his mantle blue:  
To-morrow to fresh woods and pastures new.’

For five years he had retired to Horton, where he had been ‘filling his lungs with the sweet air of the healthy downs round about Buckinghamshire,’ and saturating his mind with the Greek and Latin writers, ‘now and then going up to London,’ as he tells us, to learn ‘something

new in music and mathematics, in which sciences I then delighted. Having passed five years in this manner, after my mother's death, I, being desirous of seeing foreign lands, and especially Italy, went abroad, with one servant, having by entreaty obtained my father's consent.'

This time at Horton, to which the Twin Poems are attributed as a whole, corresponds entirely to the opening scene of *L'Allegro*. How thoroughly English is the description of the morning lark, the hawthorns, the dappled dawn, the climbing vine, the sweetbriar, the wild-rose, and the hounds and horn echoing in the distance, sights and sounds rare or unknown in Switzerland! But, far from referring to any one place, after the merry side of English country life, the writer gives the following description, which is strikingly Swiss :

‘Straight mine eye hath caught *new pleasures*,  
While the landscape round it measures,’

etc. But we must pause before entering the laughing valley of the Rhone, by which Milton returned to England, and follow him as he sets foot in the Paris of Louis XIII.’s reign, for we desire to follow across the Twin Poems the visions of the poet.\*

Milton, arriving in the gay Paris of 1638, would not have to seek far for images of mirth ; and, if we are not greatly mistaken, the following lines from *L'Allegro* are a minute delineation of the things and persons he met then :

\* Although Professor Masson sees no good reason for his own conjecture, it was he who suggested to me, some years ago, that Milton might have seen in Paris the picture which met the eye of the Scottish poet Drummond of Hawthornden in 1607, in the spacious galleries where the fair of St. Germain was held. This picture of two figures moved him much. ‘The first,’ he wrote, ‘clothed in a sky-coloured mantle with some red, held out his finger, by way of demonstration, in scorn to another, in a sable mantle, who held his arms across, declined his head pitifully, and seemed to shed tears.’

' Tower'd cities please us then,  
 And the busy hum of men,  
 Where throngs of knights and barons bold,  
 In weeds of peace high triumphs hold,  
 With store of ladies, whose bright eyes  
 Rain influence, and judge the prize  
 Of wit or arms, while both '

(both the literary critics and the soldiers)

' contend  
 To win her grace, whom all commend.'

What could Milton mean by such words? This lady, whoever she is, is no village Queen of the May, such as were common in the reign of James I. She belongs to 'tower'd cities.'\*

The 'knights' would be the warriors of the Thirty Years' War, returned 'in weeds of peace' to a well-earned rest for a time; the 'store of ladies' would be the dainty circle clustering round Catherine de Vivonne,† Marquise de Rambouillet, and her daughters; the bright eyes of these ladies, whose critical taste was the lever that raised the French Academy, rained influence, like the eyes of those who sat round the lists of old, recompensing the victors who wore their favours.

\* See the 'Vie de Madame de Longueville,' by Victor Cousin. The extraordinary beauty of Mademoiselle de Bourbon, who was nearly twenty in 1638, the power of her eyes and her influence in literature, lead us to believe that, among this host of beautiful and talented women, she was the one who had struck Milton by her personal appearance and literary position. She it is, probably, 'whom all commend,' for, after looking carefully at the dates and descriptions of all the feminine contemporaries of Milton in Paris, we perceive that she unites, as none other, beauty, critical taste, personal prestige, powerful eyes, and the flower of youth. She married the Duke of Longueville some time after Milton's passage. If throughout the twin labyrinths we have the good fortune to find the conducting thread of Milton's travels, is it not worth while to examine point by point the evidence for and against the supposition that these poems describe real experiences?

† Catherine de Vivonne married the Marquis in 1600.

The prize is of ‘wit or arms.’

As to ‘arms,’ the Thirty Years’ War was winning Alsace-Lorraine to France.

As to ‘wit,’ the *femmes précieuses* were the supreme judges of good taste, before they became the *précieuses ridicules*.

‘The ladies of Paris,’ says Mr. Henry Morley, in his ‘First Sketch of English Literature,’ ‘began the movement of reform by exercising social influence ; the Marquise de Rambouillet, reinforced by four daughters, was still living at the accession of Charles II. Many English “persons of quality” in Paris during the Commonwealth would be among her guests.’

To us moderns, one vista of the past is apt to hide another. We are in danger of losing the delicate comparison of Milton between the lists of the Middle Ages, which were not so far off then, and the critical circle of the Hôtel de Rambouillet. In both cases,

‘None but the brave deserve the fair.’

The victorious warrior in *L’Allegro*, as well as the successful poet, may

‘Win *her* grace whom all commend.’

Continuing about the Marquise, Mr. Morley writes : ‘Before her Pierre Corneille read his tragedies and the youthful Bossuet first displayed the genius of the preacher.’

But this is not all : ‘both contend’ ; literature and war lie at the feet of a new Rowena. Who is she ?

Are not the lines above quoted an allusion to the powerful eyes of Mademoiselle de Bourbon ? Is not she commended on all sides, arbiter of wit and centre of the ladies who received the ‘barons bold’ or urged them on to glory ?

We shall refer to nothing that is not illustrative of the descriptions of the travels which we unearth in the Twin Poems. In Paris, by Sir H. Wotton's introduction, Milton saw Lord Scudamore and the Earl of Leicester, Ambassadors from Charles I. to Louis XIII. There he met Hugo Grotius, Ambassador from the widow of Gustavus Adolphus, who had perished at Lutzen in 1632. Now, since 1635, the year of the foundation of the French Academy, France had joined in the Thirty Years' War, struggling against the House of Austria, under the leadership of Richelieu. Condé, Turenne and Coligny were young warriors ; Châtillon and Brézé had gained the battle of Avein, near Liège, in 1635 ; two years later the Cardinal de La Valette took several towns : in a word, France was spreading Rhinewards. Artois, Roussillon, Alsace and Lorraine were gained from Austria. Young beauties in Paris were waiting to award the prize of arms to the gallant victors.

Milton would not be insensible to their charms. They would take him to their summer retreats at Chantilly and other country seats, where Coligny, Danelot, the Ducs de Nemours, Châtillon, d'Enghien, spent long days with them in the woods, feasting, acting, reciting poetry,

‘ In unreproved pleasures free.’

Among this fair assemblage there was one whose beauty and charm surpassed all, and ‘ who was admired not only by the wits and pious priests of the time,’ but allowed supreme honours even by the women who surrounded her—Anne Geneviève de Bourbon, sister to the young Duc d'Enghien. Her father was Henri de Bourbon, Prince de Condé, and her mother the celebrated beauty, Charlotte Marguerite de Montmorency. Born in a dungeon, and carefully brought up by the Princess, between the convent of the Carmelites and the Hôtel de Rambouillet, which centre of

culture she entered at twelve, she was so averse to the pleasures of the world that she is said to have shed bitter tears on the occasion of her first ball. It was as if she presaged the sorrow that awaited her. Her entrance into the world with her young brother was brilliant in the extreme. Four years later Milton would have known her, in 1638, before her marriage with the Duc de Longueville. The years of her greatest splendour, we are told by her careful biographer, Victor Cousin, were from 1638 to 1648. He writes :

‘Quelle suite de femmes ce siècle nous présente, environnées d’hommages, entraînant après elles tous les cœurs et répandant, de proche en proche, dans tous les rangs, ce culte de la beauté que, d’un bout de l’Europe à l’autre, on a appelé la galanterie, à commencer par Charlotte de Montmorency et à finir par Madame de Montespan !

‘Madame de Longueville avait un charme particulier, les yeux du plus tendre bleu. Des cheveux d’un blond cendré et de la dernière finesse, descendant en boucles abondantes, ornaient l’ovale gracieux de son visage et inondaient d’admirables épaules, très découvertes selon la mode du temps.’

Her voice, too, was ‘soft and low,’ a thing in Milton’s appreciation no less excellent than in Shakespeare’s ; her complexion was of the most delicate pearl ; her gestures were in perfect harmony with the tones of her voice and her expressive features.

‘Mais le charme qui lui était propre était un abandon plein de grâce, une langueur qui avait des réveils brillants, quand la passion la saisissait, mais qui lui donnait un air de nonchalance aristocratique.’

Victor Cousin explains that this is no fancy portrait. He quotes the testimony of several contemporary writers. The Cardinal de Retz says : ‘It was impossible to see her with-

out loving and wishing to please her. Her eyes were not large, but beautiful and bright; their blue was admirable. Poets always compared her to lilies and roses. The pink and white of her complexion, and her flaxen, silvery hair, in company with so many wonderful things, made her more like an angel than a woman.' La Grande Mademoiselle wrote also: 'Monsieur de Longueville was old; Mademoiselle de Bourbon was young, and fair as an angel.' Monsieur de Scudéry praises her, as well as the good old priest, Paul Dubosc. She was the publicly acknowledged sovereign judge of literature, the queen of *bel esprit*, the arbiter of taste and elegance. We suspect Milton and Mademoiselle de Bourbon united their voices to condemn the formality of much French poetry, for one day somebody read to her 'La Pucelle,' by Chapelain. She said: 'Oui, cela est fort beau, mais cela est bien ennuyeux.' Milton, too, in his *Allegro*, will not admit theatrical pieces, if they are neither amusing nor true to Nature:

' Then to the well-trod stage anon,  
If Johnson's learned sock be on,  
Or sweetest Shakespeare, Fancy's child,  
Warble his native wood-notes wild.'

*À la bonne heure!* The notes of Nature would ever be welcome to the young English poet and to the beautiful arbiter of French taste, both appreciating the true charm of Divine philosophy.

At the Hôtel de Rambouillet the associates of the noble girl are described as a nest of attractive and terrible beauties. There were la Grande Mademoiselle, Madame de la Vallière, Mesdemoiselles de Boutteville, Mesdemoiselles du Vigean, and the clever Mademoiselle de Scudéry, besides her older and most intimate friend, la Marquise de Sablé. Round each of these names hangs some story, romantic, chivalrous or tragic. Monsieur Victor Cousin describes

Mademoiselle de Bourbon as indisputably the first and leading figure of this gay circle. The marriage with Monsieur de Longueville was undertaken without love, and was most unhappy. Ere long her exquisite beauty was somewhat tarnished by small-pox. In 1649—some ten years after the interview we suppose she had with Milton—Benserade and Voiture wrote two rival sonnets. All the Court took part with Benserade, but Madame de Longueville, still beautiful (although not quite what Milton would have known her), approved the verses of Voiture. The prestige of her judgment was such that she brought round everyone to her opinion.

After reading the engaging biography by Victor Cousin, we can fancy what sympathy Milton, in the midst of this frivolous assembly, would have with the noble soul of Mademoiselle de Bourbon. The shady groves of Chantilly, which he may have visited, or the country seat at Ruel, where the Princess had a theatre, may have suggested the lines

‘There let Hymen oft appear  
In saffron robe, with taper clear,  
And pomp, and feast, and revelry,  
With mask and antique pageantry;  
Such sights as youthful poets dream  
On summer eves by haunted stream.’

What would be more natural than marriages between the knights and bright-eyed women?

We cannot leave this interesting figure without a glimpse into the love and sorrow of her life. The platonic gallantry of the Hôtel de Rambouillet did not alarm, but rather pleased her. In the end, the wish to be loved and the wish to show the power of her eyes and her wit were her ruin. She loved but one, the ungrateful Duc de La Rochefoucauld, and for him sacrificed her all. He meant to arrive at the favour of her brother, the Duc d'Enghien, afterwards

the Grand Condé, and, with this political end in view, sought the good graces of the sister. Sincere repentance, after being abandoned by the handsome diplomatist, brought Madame de Longueville back for long years to that convent of the Carmelites in which she had been brought up, and whose protection she had been so loath to leave for the treacherous waters of worldly success.

## CHAPTER II

### MILTON IN ITALY

ON September 10, 1638, Milton reached Florence. He did not go by ship from Marseilles, as Sir H. Wotton advised him, but travelled by land, in order not to miss the natural beauties and the artistic treasures of Nice, Genoa, Leghorn and Pisa, till he arrived in the town of Michael Angelo, Florence itself. Here he spent two delightful months. Here he saw living in marble the old gods and mythological personages of whom he had read so much, besides many heroes of the Old Testament—not only the statues, but the paintings and the architecture, of Michael Angelo. With what joy he must have read the poems of this brother-genius, and examined all the statues and drawings he left behind, and his Church of St. Peter, begun in 1546, when past seventy-two! Here Milton had close fellowship with a mind nearly akin to his own, and with as noble and uncompromising a soul. ‘Michael Angelo’s irreproachable morals formed a striking contrast to those of the times in which he lived. These qualities, united to his philosophical turn of mind and intense devotion to art, disposed him to contemplation and solitude.’ Here Milton would naturally seek out the most stupendous works of the great sculptor, which, in Florence, are the tombs of the

Medici in the New Sacristy of San Lorenzo. Only two of the statues surmounting the eight tombs were accomplished ; ‘for Michael Angelo was working upon those parts which were incomplete, when, in consequence of differences between him and Duke Alessandro de’ Medici, he found himself compelled by motives of personal safety to bid a final adieu to Florence’ (*‘Life of Michael Angelo,’* by John Harford, D.C.L., F.R.S.).

‘The Sacristy is of a square form surmounted by a central cupola ; it has a large recess in each side, within two of which, and opposite each other, are the statues of Giuliano de’ Medici, Duc de Nemours, brother of Leo X., and of Lorenzo, Duke of Urbino, grandson of the Magnificent. The statues of the two are seated, and seem to symbolize Action and Contemplation. That of Giuliano is dignified and imposing ; his hands are placed upon a baton of office which rests upon his knees. The opposite figure of Lorenzo is highly idealized, stamped with the character of profound reflection.’ ‘It thus acquired,’ writes Dr. Harford, ‘the distinctive appellation of *La Pensée de Michel-Ange,* or *Il Penseroso.*\*

The four figures which adorn the tombs, Night and Morning, Twilight and Aurora, show once more the same sort of contrast as is remarkable in the structure of the Twin Poems and in other works of art of the period.

But if Michael Angelo was only to be found in his works, several were there, living friends, Carlo Dati, Pietro Frescobaldi the organist, and other distinguished Florentines, ‘whose memory,’ he wrote, ‘time shall never destroy.’ Here, too, in flesh and blood, but aged and ill, was the

\* *Penseroso* is an old Italian word meaning thoughtful, as anyone can discover by reference to such dictionaries as Michaelis’ or *Il Grande* (Cotterill).

great Galileo,\* condemned by the Inquisition and hopelessly blind.

What we now wish to suggest is that, when Milton wrote in *Il Penseroso*:

'Where I may oft outwatch the Bear,  
With thrice-great Hermes,'

he was alluding to the astronomical studies of Galileo, whom he takes as a type of *Melancholy*.

Signor Favaro, charged by the Italian Government, during the University festivities of Padua in 1892, with the publication of Galileo's books, indicated to us an article in the *Archivio Storico Romano* † by Herr A. von Reumont. This well-known critic concludes, from the best and most trustworthy Italian evidence, that the author of *Paradise Lost* visited the melancholy sage about September, 1638, neither in his town house, Sulla Costa, nor in a convent, nor even in the Torre del Gallo,‡ but at the house next door to the tower, called Villa d' Arcetri, where Galileo passed his old age, in all the misery and misfortune which he describes in the last letter he ever wrote, one to Alessandro Boccherini Buonamici, from his sick-bed, twenty days before his death.

\* The photograph on the frontispiece is from a cliché kindly given by the former proprietor of the Torre del Gallo, Count Q. Galletti. It is from an original attributed to Sustermans, the Fleming. There is also a very fine bust of Galileo in the museum of the Count, with telescopes of the seventeenth century, portraits of Copernicus and of Galileo's daughter, and numerous valuable curiosities.

† Tome xxvi., pp. 427-443, 1877.

‡ The Villa d' Arcetri, next to the Torre del Gallo, overlooking Florence, the winding Arno, and a large tract of hilly country, contains many souvenirs of Galileo, and other most interesting works of art. There is a pension in part of the building, which affords the leisure necessary for a thorough investigation of the treasures belonging to Count Galletti. The same laurels are there as are described by Zanella. The writer climbed to the top, where the celebrated cock in sheet-iron trembles in the wind.

In a former letter from La Costa, Galileo wrote to Elia Diodati, in Paris, complaining of his bad sight, inflammation and running of the eyes, his utter prostration, and the fear that he would soon be too weak even to dictate his letters.\* Not even when he became totally blind did his persecutors cease their molestations, although his treaty with the States-General of Holland was effectually stopped by his infirmity. 'This treaty,' wrote Galileo, on August 14, to the same Elia Diodati, 'ought not to bear me any prejudice, but rather honour and fame, were I an ordinary man, and not more miserable than others.'† This letter is from Arcetri.

When the interview took place cannot be determined with certainty. On Milton's return from Rome in 1639, he was well known in Italy. The Florentines, indeed, received him with great liberality, and did not question him as to his faith. He had a hearty welcome also from learned men in Rome, even from a Cardinal, the cultivated nephew of Urban VIII., and he dined in the English College there, dedicated to St. Thomas of Canterbury. Both Heinsius and Manso complain, nevertheless, of his too great freedom of speech and his contumely of the Pope.

The clearest allusions to Galileo occur in *Paradise Lost*, where he is even named (Book V., line 262):

\* See letter to Cardinal Barberini of July 23, printed in the second volume 'del Commercio epistolare nell' edizione Alberiana.'

† We give here part of a letter, on the old pencil portrait of Galileo, from a learned Venetian senator, dated Vicenza, November 5, 1902:

'Il ritratto di Galilei, dipinto o disegnato da Guido Reni, non è che una contraffazione grossolana, e di cui si conosce il pittore modernissimo, che non avrebbe dovuto perpetuarla. Quanto all'altra so che l'originale consiste in un disegno che pare a matita, su cartone, ed è veramente bello, e certamente non posteriore al secolo xvii. Però non esiste alcun documento, che provi che sia uscito dall'autore dei due ritratti di Galilei, che sono l'uno agli

'As when by night the glass  
Of Galileo, less assured, observes  
Imagined lands and mountains in the moon.'

(Book I., line 257 :)

'The moon, whose orb  
Through optic glass the Tuscan artist views  
At evening from the top of Fesole,  
Or in Valdarno, to descry new lands,  
Rivers and mountains in her spotty globe.' \*

(And line 301 :)

' lay entranced  
Thick as autumnal leaves that strow the brooks  
In Vallombrosa, where the Etrurian shades  
High over-arch'd embower.'

Why, it may be asked, did not Milton name Galileo as clearly in *Il Penseroso* as in the first of these passages? We would answer: In the whole course of the Twin Poems, only two proper names of moderns are used, and they are those of two authors, Jonson and Shakespeare, who were not living in 1639. All the other personages are enveloped in mythological disguise. Galileo, who was Milton's contemporary, and who was probably not dead when *Il Penseroso* was written, could not figure with Zephyr, Bacchus, Saturn, or the Muses. If he appear, he must take an ancient disguise, and one in keeping with his character. None could be found so apt as Hermes, for *had not Galileo wrested from the book of Nature her secret by discovering the true solar system to mankind?*

Giacomo Zanella,† a poet of great merit and charm, who

Uffizi, l'altro a Pitti. La fotografia che Ella mi ha mandata, non può dare nemmeno una pallida idea dell' originale, come non la dava altra fotografia che dee aver servito per questa riproduzione.

'... Ho scritto in italiano per essere più esatto.

' Il Suo,

' FEDELE LAMPERTICO.'

\* See note to Dr. Thomas Newton's edition of Milton's poems.

† Florence, Le Monnier.

died in 1886, has left a poem on the meeting of these 'giants.' At early dawn, when the moon is paling, the young poet climbs unexpectedly through the olive bushes and surprises the old man, who, by a poetical license, is not yet deprived of his daughter's presence.

Did Zanella take the 'pensive nun' of *Il Penseroso*, as the present writer does, to mean Galileo's daughter? Whether or not such were his intention, he certainly does make his Milton 'outwatch the Bear' with Galileo, the thrice-great Hermes of our theme, for the stars grow dim and the moon becomes pale while, through the summer night, Galileo lays bare the sorrows of his life to the sympathetic Milton.

Thus does Hermes keep company with the author of *Il Penseroso*. Together they will raise the ghost of Plato to unveil the fate of the dead, and ask him

' . . . of those demons that are found  
In fire, air, flood or underground,  
Whose power hath a true consent  
With planet or with element.'

Lycidas invokes neither Hermes nor Plato. He hears,

' Where other groves and other streames among  
With nectar pure his oozy locks he laves,  
The unexpressive nuptial song.'

His 'solemn troops' and 'sweet societies' are of a tamer mood. But the Twin Poems call up Hermes, Plato, and Orpheus.

Again, at the end of *Il Penseroso*, Galileo reappears as learned in 'every herb that sucks the dew,' as well as in astronomy; had not his old experience foreseen, what posterity was slow to acknowledge, the true solar system?

' And may at last my weary age  
Find out the peaceful hermitage,  
The hairy gown and mossy cell,  
Where I may sit and rightly spell  
Of every star that heaven doth shew,  
And every herb that sucks the dew ;

Till old experience do attain  
 To something like prophetic strain.  
 These pleasures, Melancholy, givc,  
 And I with thee will choose to live.'

The poet Zanella has embellished his creation, to no small degree, by introducing the sweet character of Maria Celeste.

To add to his sorrows, Galileo's angelic daughter died in 1634, eight years before himself. He would speak of her to Milton, whose ardent imagination would well picture her pure form among the jessamine and laurels with which Zanella clothes the hill of Arcetri: 'Maria, his gentle first-born and faithful guardian, stood by him, her hair hidden by the bands of her sisterhood.'

The opening of the second part of the poem gives the rising of the full moon over Florence, and Maria is seen looking at it. The silver rays are beating full upon her eyes, which she does not remove till her father calls her, in order to sound her praises as his Antigone.

Although Milton never saw her, the memory of her virtues transmitted to him by Galileo seems to live again in the *Penseroso*, as well as her personal appearance and attitude, for Melancholy is invoked under the form of a nun :

' Come, pensive nun, devout and pure,  
 Sober, steadfast and demure,  
 All in a robe of darkest grain,  
 Flowing with majestic train,  
 And sable stole of Cypress lawn,  
 Over thy decent shoulders drawn.  
 Come, but keep thy wonted state,  
 With even step and musing gait,  
 And looks commerçing with the skies,  
 Thy rapt soul sitting in thine eyes :  
 There, held in holy passion still,  
 Forget thyself to marble\*, till  
 With a sad leaden downward cast,  
 Thou fix them on the earth as fast.'

---

\* This line recalls the monument erected to the memory of Pope Julius II. It was achieved by slow degrees. At last, on a reduced

The companions of Melancholy are just those of Maria Celeste, who lived in a convent hard by, and came daily to tend her blind father. These are Peace, Quiet, Fast, Leisure, Contemplation, with Cynthia and the Nightingale.

scale, it was finally erected at Rome, in the Church of San Pietro in Vincoli, where it appears quite out of place. It is some time before the spectator discovers the reclining form of Pope Julius on the second stage of the monument, where the Moses of Michael Angelo is the all-absorbing object of interest. On each side of the Moses are two statues emblematic of Active and Contemplative Life, which Milton seems to have examined attentively. They were designed and finished by Michael Angelo himself. Mr. Harford says that the idea is borrowed from Dante. The Active Life is represented as Leah, who holds a mirror in one hand and in the other a wreath of flowers, the symbol of cheerfulness.

The Contemplative Life, under the name of Rachel, indicates by the bent knee, by the upraised head and eye, that her rapt soul is mounting heavenwards,

‘And looks commencing with the skies,  
Thy wrapt soul sitting in thine eyes,  
Forget thyself to marble.’

According to Dante, Leah, the Active Life, is thus introduced at morning :

‘About the hour,  
As I believe, when Venus from the east  
First lightened on the mountain, she whose orb  
Seems always glowing with the fire of love,  
A lady young and beautiful, I dreamed,  
Was passing o'er a lea : and, as she came,  
Methought I saw her ever and anon  
Bending to cull the flowers ; and thus she sang :  
Know ye, whoever of my name would ask,  
That I am Leah : for my brow to weave  
A garland, these fair hands unwearied ply.  
To please me at the crystal mirror, here  
I deck me.’

Michael Angelo followed Dante's idea in giving her the flowers and the mirror :

‘But my sister Rachel, she  
Before her glass abides the livelong day  
Her radiant eyes beholding, charmed no less  
Than I with this delightful task. Her joy  
In contemplation, as in labour mine.’

‘Purg.,’ xxvii.

The ideas attributed to Hernies and Zoroaster are creations of the modern Platonists of the Florentine Academy, founded more than a century before Milton's passage in Italy. They thought that our present existence is death, and our body our sepulture. Milton echoes their thoughts in his Ninth Sonnet :

‘ Meekly thou didst resign this earthly load  
Of death, called life ; which us from life doth sever.’

We cannot refrain from quoting here a few lines from Pic de la Mirandole, which are very Miltonic in spirit : ‘ Dieu a créé l'homme ni mortel ni immortel, afin que l'homme devint l'artisan et le modeleur de sa propre destinée, et qu'il pût, selon son arbitre et son choix, ou dégénérer dans les êtres inférieurs et brutaux, ou renaître dans les êtres divins.’

The Twin Poems are inspired, like *Lycidas* and *Comus*, with classic lore, but have in addition a strong Neo-Platonic basis.

All here is correspondence, contrast. The slumbering morn is aroused in *L'Allegro*, while his brother basks in the dewy-fingered sleep induced by the drowsy song of the bee and the murmuring of waters.

The austere *square* tower, where languished the aged Galileo (*Il Penseroso*, lines 85 and 167), has its merry counterpart in the smiling, ivy-clad, *round* *Tour de Duin*, to which the poet's imagination has transferred the legendary Fair Lady of Aigremont (see pp. 26, 63), ‘ cynosure of neighbouring eyes.’

*L'Allegro* and *Il Penseroso* mark the two poles of human existence—the light and shade of the great Artist, the Day and Night of Lorenzo's tomb in Florence ; both the everlasting Martha and the Mary, the mind waiting at the feet of Truth (they also serve) and the mind fixed on lively, active work. Each poem sets the other in strong relief,

and the opening of each deprecates strongly its fellow. But in every detail they correspond to each other organically, like the two sides of a leaf, like the two sides of the body, or those forms made by folding paper over a blot, which, by-the-bye, furnishes a hypothesis as to how organic life began.

'Who knows, and what does it matter,' we read in Professor Masson's article in *Good Words* for January, 1893, 'whether the "fleecy cloud" may be attributed to Horton?' A 'fleecy cloud,' we answer, may be seen throughout the temperate zone. But it does matter to us very much whether the scenery in both poems be 'eclectic and visionary,' as is suggested. No doubt there is a certain eclecticism in the poems, but there is no reason to suppose that they sprang spontaneously from the imagination of a book-worm. We think this is no 'scenery invented to suit the contrasted moods of cheerfulness and melancholy,' but the outward expression of what the young, vibrating soul of Milton drank in so deeply, the mountains and valleys, the joys and sorrows of the men he met and of the men who had trodden that classic soil before him.

But we must hasten on with Milton from Florence to Rome, where he had the opportunity of hearing the cultivated and remarkable voice of Leonora Baroni.

' And ever, against eating cares,  
Lap me in soft Lydian airs,  
Married to immortal verse ; \*  
Such as the meeting soul may pierce,  
In notes, with many a winding bout  
Of linked sweetness long drawn out,  
With wanton heed and giddy cunning ;  
The melting voice though mazes running,  
Untwisting all the chains that tie  
The hidden soul of harmony.'

\* See also Milton's poem, *At a Solemn Music*:

' Blest pair of sirens, pledges of heaven's joy,  
Sphere-born harmonious sisters, voice and verse,  
Wed your divine sounds,' etc.

Strangely, it does not occur to Professor David Masson to apply this description to the singing of Leonora Baroni, while he affirms that this virtuous lady and her mother, of Mantua, were reputed, between 1637 and 1641, the finest voices in the world. Catherine, the other daughter, completed the trio, who, going about from town to town, ‘moved Italy to madness,’ as he tells us in his most graphic biography of our great poet.

How deeply Milton was touched by the voice of Leonora is evident from his Latin poem, translated by the learned Professor :

‘TO LEONORA, SINGING AT ROME.

‘To everyone, so let the nations believe, there is allotted from among the ethereal ranks his own winged angel. What wonder, Leonora, if it be so, to thee there should be a greater glory? Thy very voice sounds God as present in thee. Either God, or at least some high intelligence of the deserted heaven, warbles active in secret through thy throat, warbles active and teaches with ease that mortal hearts may by degrees grow accustomed to immortal sound. If, however, God is in all things and through all diffused, in thee alone He speaks; all else He inhabits mute.’\*

The description of clear-story in stained glass might, of course, have arisen from Milton’s visits to English cathedrals. ‘We would cite the magnificent stained glass which decorates the chapel of King’s College, Cambridge, of the sixteenth century; the east window of St. Margaret’s Church, Westminster, stands as a worthy contemporary. A most glorious example of the stained glass of the thirteenth century yet remains in La Sainte Chapelle at Paris, and the effect of a building entirely illuminated by windows completely filled with the richest and most brilliant tints is only to be appreciated and enjoyed in that beautiful edifice.’†

\* ‘Quòd si cuncta quidem Deus est, per cunctaque fusus,  
In te unâ loquitur, cætera mutus habet.’

† Oxford Glossary, Part I., p. 239.

It is probable that Milton visited this in Paris, before writing the words

'But let my due feet never fail  
To walk the studious cloister's pale,  
And love the high embowed roof,  
With antic pillars massy proof'—

that is, the bowed or bent Gothic arch, sustained by ancient massive pillars, time-proof,

'And *storied* windows richly dight,  
Casting a dim religious light.'

So much for Gothic architecture and painted windows, whether in England or abroad ; now for the music :

'There let the pealing organ blow  
To the full-voiced choir below,  
In service high and anthems clear,  
As may with sweetness, through mine ear,  
Dissolve me into ecstasies,  
And bring all heaven before mine eyes.'

Does this sound like English Church music a hundred years after the Reformation ? Are these English hymns ?

Organ music was poor in the time of Charles I. It is the voice of Dean Stanley that comes in here, with its silvery tones, from out of Westminster Abbey, to our help : \*

'The first musician who was buried within the church—the Chaucer, as it were, of the musicians' corner—was Henry Purcell. . . . He was buried October 2<sup>nd</sup>, 1676, close to the organ which he had been the first to raise to celebrity, and with the anthem which he had, but a few months before, composed for the funeral of Queen Mary, (wife of William of Orange).† We see at once that this

\* 'Memorials of Westminster Abbey,' chap. iv., p. 289.

+ See Historical Chart.

Purcell came somewhat later than Frescobaldi, who died in 1654, twenty-two years before him, having been organist forty years in St. Peter's at Rome. Frescobaldi is the greatest organist of the seventeenth century. Born at Ferrara, formed in the best school of the time, the Flemish school —he was celebrated while still young as a singer, composer and organ-player. Milton's visit to Florence fell in the midst of his brilliant career. The poet, who in his youth had played the organ, and who later solaced the cares of Cromwell by his music, would indeed delight to hear Frescobaldi play. One can fancy all his sensitive ear enjoyed for the first time in Italy. Frescobaldi's music is of the fugue sort ; the sonorous bass notes are long-sustained, so as to give to some degree the effect of the modern organ. We are not surprised to learn that Milton supplied himself with a provision of heavy music-books. Purcell learnt much from him.\* Considering the condition of music in England in the latter half of the seventeenth century, this composer has a high place. . . . He has left works of all sorts, sometimes of evident originality.'

One sometimes regrets that Milton never heard a symphony of Beethoven, nor saw the Holy Grail descend in Wagner's *Parsifal* along the silver beam which music paints so much better than poetry ; but, if we are to judge from the transports in *Il Penseroso*, we may conclude that he could not have got more delight out of these than he had in Frescobaldi's early organ music.

Puritan as he was, the Latin chanting responding to the organ 'dissolved him into ecstasies.' We can well fancy that, when Lawes put for the first time English words to music, it was a great satisfaction to him.

\* We suspect that in the latter half of the seventeenth century he imitated Frescobaldi, having got hold of his music-books from Milton, whose journey ended in 1639.

' Harry, whose tuneful and well-measured lay  
   First taught our English music how to span  
 Words with just note and accent—  
   To after-age thou shalt be writ the man  
 That with smooth air could humour best our tongue.' \*

Our tongue, indeed, is somewhat rebel to the muses. Milton felt it, and congratulated Lawes on being the first to conquer the difficulty. But the praise given in *L'Allegro* to

' The melting voice in mazes running '

applies to Leonora Baroni. Cowper has translated two poems in her honour, written in Latin by Milton, besides the one above quoted. No incipient English psalmody could account for such a burst of enthusiastic admiration, just at the time of this singer's greatest fame, between 1637 and 1641 :

' Untwisting all the chains that tie  
   The hidden soul of harmony ;  
 That Orpheus' self may heave his head  
   From golden slumber on a bed  
   Of heap'd Elysian flowers, and hear  
   Such strains as would have won the ear  
   Of Pluto, to have quite set free  
   His half-regained Eurydice.'

---

\* 'To Mr. H. Lawes, On the Publishing his Airs' (Sonnet viii.).

## CHAPTER III

### MILTON ON THE SIMPLON PASS

FROM Rome Milton went to Naples, where he made the acquaintance of Manso, the friend of Tasso ;\* on his return to Rome, Leonora, we may suppose, as well as the Roman antiquities and the organ music of Frescobaldi, retained him during January and part of February, 1639. At Florence he would revisit *Il Penseroso* of Michael Angelo, the name, blending in some morning dream with the melancholy vision of great Galileo, suggesting, perchance, the poem. We possess a letter begun at Florence, March 30, 1639, in which Milton writes : ‘Having crossed the Apennines, I passed through Bologna and Ferrara on my way to Venice.’ There he spent a month more, collecting the music which he sent by sea to England. Lucca Marenzo, Monte Verdi, Horatio Vecchi, and Cifa, were among the best composers at that time, besides Frescobaldi. ‘Rid of these [music-books] by their shipment, moving homeward through Verona, Milan, and the Pennine Alps, and then by the Lake Leman, I arrived at Geneva.’

The Pennine Alps are Mont Blanc, the Matterhorn, the Great St. Bernard, and Monte Rosa.

Starting from Milan, it would have been quite natural to take the Great St. Bernard Pass. He had meant to visit

\* ‘*Mansus sylvarum liber.*’

Greece, and was forced by political reasons to return to England, where his friend Diodati was dying, unknown to him. Why did he not take the shorter and easier route? The same independent, adventurous spirit which had made him despise Sir H. Wotton's advice on the way out, and which led him, in theology and politics, out of the beaten track, must needs now lead him by the Simplon! So, at least, says tradition at Domodossola, and so implies his Latin poem to Diodati:

'Ah! what roaming whimsey drew my steps to a distance,  
Over the rocks hung in air and the Alpine passes and glaciers!'<sup>\*</sup>

He evidently regrets having taken the more picturesque but longer road, not knowing that his friend's life was ebbing away day by day. Parts of the old Roman road are still to be seen, alongside of the military road constructed by Napoleon, sometimes running below, sometimes at another angle, sometimes broken off sharp.

This ancient road had the Hospice of the Simplon at its summit. It was sold by the Knights Hospitallers to the Stockalper family of Brigue, but appears to contain no longer any object of interest. Above it, on Napoleon's highroad, is the present hospice, built originally for barracks, where now the Augustine monks, sent yearly by the St. Bernard monastery, lodge travellers.

The passage of the Simplon adds the corner-stone to our arch of evidence.

The inhabitants of Domodossola, and especially the Rosminian College established there, retain the belief that Milton passed by their town on his way to Brigue. A Reverend Father said to the writer: 'We were talking of this only a few days ago, how Milton had been here. We are

\* ' Heu quis me ignotas traxit vagus error in oras  
Ire per aëreas rupes, Alpemque nivosam !'

all of your opinion.' There is even a legend which pretends that *Paradise Lost* was composed there. There is no smoke without fire. It is certain that the aspect of a level plain, which suddenly droops towards the sea near Vallombrosa, fits beautifully the closing lines of the great epic :

‘In either hand the hastening angel caught  
Our lingering parents, and to the eastern gate  
Led them direct, and down the cliff as fast,  
To the subducted plain ; then disappeared.’

We have essayed to prove that the inspiration of the Twin Poems came in part from Paris and Italy; we have shown negatively that in England Milton could neither have heard the organ music nor the human voice wedded to words in such perfection as he describes. We have also shown positively that in Italy he had the opportunity of hearing both. That they enraptured him is shown by facts outside the antiphonal poems we are scrutinizing.

We hope to set forth as clearly that the extreme of tragic scenery on the Simplon, and the intense beauty of the country, as you emerge from the Rhone Valley to the plain, suggested much of the contrasted scenery of *Il Penseroso* and *L'Allegro*.

In these poems we get a glimpse of Milton's youthful feelings, before diplomacy and struggles for truth had made him the sober man he became later on. In the depths of Gondo every crag seems alive to him ; under the smiling sun of Bex and its environs, he basks ‘in close covert by some brook.’

What is an imagination fed alone on books and narrow experience? Not rich and full as Milton's was, after his foreign travels. You have only to compare sweet classical *Lycidas* with these poems, rise with the learning of the Italian Renaissance.

Milton's free contact with men and women of such varied excellence, combined with his wide knowledge of antiquity and Neoplatonism, are woven by the swiftly-flying shuttle of his boundless imagination into the rich tapestry of the Twin Poems. And the colours are fast ; our only pretension is to bring them out of their musty staircase into the fair and open sunlight.

The first suggestion that the Twin Poems were written as a storehouse of memories, foreign no less than English, came to the writer quite by chance. A residence of some years in view of the Tour de Duin\* at Bex brought so strongly to mind the words :

‘ Towers and battlements it sees  
Bosom'd high in tufted trees,’

as to impose the question with an obsession which led to a radical exploration of the subject.

An Italian of most suggestive and wide intelligence came across the path of the writer : ‘ If Bex,’ he said, ‘ seems to you a scene corresponding to *L'Allegro*, the rocks on the Italian side may well have suggested *Il Penseroso*, for they are remarkably dark and terrible.’

Milton had arrived by sea, passing Genoa and Pisa ; if he took the Simplon, it was on his way back, by Milan, the Pennines, and the Leman.

\* As for the Simplon, very uncertain (as a road) in the time of the Romans, it is not mentioned before 1235. But it soon became very important as an international passage, provided with a hospice. The Bishop of Sion, who bought from the Castello family the eastern slope of the pass, concluded arrangements, in 1272, with merchant companies from Milan and from Pistoia to establish a regular service by the Simplon, with fixed stations and tolls to be paid. The road was fit for carriages—at least, during part of its length. This means of communication must have brought to the Valais in Switzerland, Savoy and France the trade of the East, being conveyed by the great commercial route of the Euphrates to the port of Lagazzo, Venice, and Milan.

Leaving Domodossola in its wide fruitful valley, on his return journey to Switzerland, the traveller passes the scattered village of Crevola, sleeping in its chestnuts, maize, and vines, and enters a solitary picturesque gorge leading to Varso, a more cultivated region, with pretty villas. Gradually the scene begins to change as he mounts the gentle ascent ; great rocks appear, frowning in the shade. These rocks, which are mostly of schist, are very different in character from those on the St. Bernard Pass. These are very beautiful, covered in places with lichens ranging from the tenderest green to orange. But on the Simplon the rocks are brittle, black, and lowering. Black ravens,\* too, are seen flying from crag to crag. As he approaches Isella, the rocks become more continuous, closer to each other, across the torrent, until they form a high wall on either hand. Melancholy, terrible are these overhanging rocks—‘hung in air’ indeed ! The large boulders on the roadside show how dangerous they become when worked upon by the weight of winter’s snow. Once the reins are thrown on the neck of the imagination, there is no end to the forms of horror discernible in the perpendicular broken crags, as the traveller becomes engaged between the walls, which rise one behind another, one above another, reminding us of those lines :

‘ And in the lowest deep a lower deep,  
Still threatening to devour me, opens wide.  
(*Paradise Lost.*)

After passing Isella—a few houses nestling in the rocks, whose parish church appears on the opposite heights, at Trasquora—he continues the direful ascent to Gondo, the road turning now to the right, now to the left, now becoming broader, now narrower, as he is further involved in

\* ‘ And the night-raven sings’ (*L’Allegro*).

the darkening vistas. In strong relief on the black rocks, that rise to 2,000 feet above sea-level, there suddenly appears, chiselled in the rock, a colossal female face. The image is soon lost in perspective, as you advance ; but at one point, from the mouth of this Egyptian-looking creature rushes the splendid torrent called La Fressinone, while far below the Doveria foams and struggles, and heaves herself a noisy passage to meet her passionate rival between the worn rocks in their narrowest gorge. To pass from Isella by Gondo to the Simplon village on a rainy or stormy day is to enter one of the most dark, uncouth, and melancholy of earth's nooks of horror. Milton must indeed have felt the weirdness of this ascent from the Italian side to the Simplon. Once out of it, we may indeed cry :

‘ Hence, loathed Melancholy,  
Of Cerberus and blackest Midnight born,  
In Stygian cave forlorn,  
‘ Mongst horrid shapes, and shrieks, and sights unholy,\*  
Find out some uncouth cell,  
Where brooding Darkness spreads her jealous wings,  
And the night-raven † sings ;  
There, under ebon shades, and low-brow’d rocks,  
As ragged as thy locks,  
In dark Cimmerian desert ever dwell.’

Such is the appreciation of *L'Allegro*, who will none of it.

But what a charm lies in this melancholy scene, and how deep in true poetic feeling is the invocation to the genius of *Il Penseroso* : ‘ Come, pensive Nun ! ’

We leave these solemn scenes ; we pass by the new Hospice du Simplon, that looks wistfully down on the

\* We are informed, by a competent observer, of the ill-fame even now attached to the galleries and narrow passages along the road near to Isella on Sundays and feast-days.

† Ravens are among the birds in the museum of Domodossola ; they frequent the Simplon rocks.

ancient one, with its square tower, sloping roof, and high belfry, for there Milton possibly slept ; and we descend into the Valley of the Rhone upon Brigue. At this point, between Berisal and Brigue, we meet some forest oaks and pines, whose tops have been lopped off by the avalanches. These find no place in the Twin Poems, but are exactly delineated in *Paradise Lost* (Book I., lines 612-614) :

‘as when heaven’s fire\*  
Hath scathed the forest oaks or mountain pines,  
With singed top, their stately growth, though bare,  
Stands on the blasted heath.’

One is reminded over and over again in this First Book of the contrasted moods of the early Twins. The ‘Evil, be thou my good,’ the ‘Hail, horrors, hail !’ the grand figure of the revolted Satan, correspond to *Il Penseroso* ; while the bliss of heaven is faintly foreshadowed by the Happy Poem. At St. Maurice the valley grows again dark and narrow ; like the motive of some sad melody recurring at the end of one of Beethoven’s *Andantes*, the Dent du Midi, seen from below, casts us one cruel precipitate glance, recalling Gondo. But *Il Penseroso* is over ; terrors and melancholy lie behind the back of the lover of Milton, for he emerges suddenly on sunlit Bex-les-Bains ! The valley has opened out, the well-watered plains lie green before him, and the panorama defies description. Milton could not pass by such a sight without noting it in his memoranda. Nothing before or after Bex, in the Rhone Valley, can equal the harmonious beauty of that point of the journey.†

\* Compare *Nova Solyma*—

‘Just so it is when Heav’n’s hurl’d lightning falls,  
Striking the wither’d top of some tall oak.’

In both cases Milton mistakes the work of the avalanche for the effect of lightning.

† The landscape round is so rich and varied that the traveller cannot take it in at once ; clouds and mist often hide some essential features.

The scene of the ‘new pleasures,’ which is Milton’s description of the view from Bex, stands in contrast, on the one hand, with the merry English life he has just depicted, and on the other with the melancholy thoughts hitherto suggested by his route.

Look all around the wonderful amphitheatre. Turn your eye, with Milton’s that ‘caught new pleasures,’ from the four august peaks of the Diablerets, by sloping Javernaz, to the delicate Dents de Morcles ; then down, down, till it rests on the distant Glaciers du Trient, and, eastward, mounts the varied declivities of the majestic Dent du Midi ! From Clarens and Vevey you discern the seven peaks of this Mountain-queen ; from Bex, *la cime de l’Est* may be visually scaled all the way up on one side. The slopes at first are green and smiling, gradually more cold and severe. The very broad base on which she rests, as she rises through precipices, torrents and *névés* to the tapering top, makes the Dent du Midi the ideal mountain, and Bex the standpoint from which to view it.

At the foot of the Dent du Midi, as the eye descends, lies the charming Plateau de Veyrossa, with its white steeple drawn on the green slopes, its *bois noir* of dark fir-trees. If the spectator now turn northwards, he will see, on either hand, mountains in waves bordering the Valley of the Rhone, and stretching beyond the lake.

There it was, then, that Milton must have arrived, as he came from Milan ‘by the Pennine Alps to the Leman,’ even had he come by the St. Bernard Pass. We may well believe it was bad weather ; he seems to have had rain passing the Simplon, and he does not seem to have seen the Dent du Midi in all her glory, because of the ‘labouring clouds.’ He saw her ‘fallows gray’ where chamois and goats feed, and her ‘barren breast,’ made of hard rock, where no vegetation can live, and on which the clouds make a bridge

across to the Dent de Morcles. It is grand to see them struggle, as it were, with the mountain, which attracts them. They will linger there for days together, tantalizing the lover of the Dent du Midi, who from day to day awaits her appearing. The late Professor Eugène Rambert, poet and Alpinist, in his book '*Bex et ses Environs*,<sup>\*</sup>' has painted with wonderful truth the divers climates which she bears on her bosom at different altitudes. It is marvellous that Milton should have observed them, too. There is first the wide green basis, rich and fruitful,

‘ Meadows trim, with daisies pied ’;

higher, ‘russet lawns,’† where little grass is left for cows; ‘fallows gray’ above, where, perhaps, few tufts may still be accessible to the goats; lastly, the cloud-tipped summit. All these expressions are hard to understand until one has seen the things they describe.

At Bex, too, in full view of the two majestic mountains,

\* Georges Bridel, Lausanne.

† The old road from Bex to Aigle did not lie, in Milton’s time, where now lies the grand highroad which continues over the Simplon (Napoleon’s). It passed, on the contrary, near to Ollon, a village between Bex and Aigle. At that part there are specially beautiful expanses of red heather in spring. Hence, perhaps, ‘russet lawns,’ for Milton returned by Bex in spring.

Rambert’s '*Bex et ses Environs*', p. 66, says: ‘La Dent du Midi s’élève au-dessus de chaudes et riches contrées, qu’elle enrichit encore en leur renvoyant les rayons du soleil qui se réfléchissent sur ses flancs. À ses pieds règne une végétation digne d’Italie; sur ses sommets reposent les neiges du pôle, et, entre deux, toute la série des possibles. Les produits et les phénomènes des zones les plus éloignées se sont donné rendez-vous sur ces pentes. Il en résulte un effet de profusion créatrice d’autant plus splendide que la montagne a des formes plus accidentées, des expositions plus changeantes, des terrains plus divers. Un tableau pareil est de ceux qu’on n’épuise pas. Et cependant on n’y remarque ni embarras, ni encombrement. Chaque chose a sa place, et de cette abondance naît un ensemble dont l’unité est aussi manifeste que la variété en est infinie.’ Should we wonder that Milton, passing there, notices its divers zones with as careful an eye as the poet Rambert?

whence they flow, are the ‘shallow brooks’: the Croisette, the torrent of St. Bartholomew (where the fairy Frisette\* lived); there are the ‘rivers wide’: the *méchante* Gryonne, which has often swept away its dykes; the swift Avançon, that hastens so madly to unburden itself in the bosom of the wide Rhône at Massonger.

It is true that many high mountains may correspond to this sort of watershed; few, however (if any) rise up straight from the plain, so as to be visible all the way up, as the Dent du Midi does, and so as to display the vegetation of its varied zones, which Milton describes.

But the poet does not stop here; he will put the dots on the *i*’s, as the French say. He has seen many towers since he left Galileo’s. On the Italian side of the Simplon, especially round Crevola, there are tall straight white towers, with many stories, and two windows on each all the way up. The Tower of Gondo is one of these, built by ‘the Stockalper family as a refuge for travellers,’ says Baedeker, ‘long before the opening of the present Simplon road.’ On the Swiss side there are also towers, of quite another type, at St. Triphon, at Sion. But none of these broader towers are at all comparable to Milton’s incomparable description of La Tour de Duin.

When near enough to see the tower and the wooded hill on which it stands, the spectator cannot, at the same time, catch sight of the great mountains on either hand. This is why the writer has given an autotype drawing, which, by bringing near the tower (in order not to lose the mountains), cannot pretend to the soft harmonious beauty of the scene, such as a simple photograph would convey.

\* See ‘Légendes Vaudoises,’ by Alfred Ceresole.



ARMS OF BEX-LES-BAINS.

## CHAPTER IV

### BEX AND LA TOUR DE DUIN

THESE ruins were the ancient Castle of Bex, built by Girold de Bex in the twelfth century, already referred to (p. 26).\* It was burnt down in 1476. The chestnut-trees which now crown all that hill were brought over from Italy in the eighteenth century, but the place was formerly thickly wooded by oak-trees, many of which remain now, especially near the tower itself. The words of *L'Allegro*, far from referring to Windsor Castle, depict, to those who know it well, the Tower of Duin, with that ‘precision of detail’ which was one form of Milton’s homage to truth, and which could but be augmented by his contact with the founders of the French Academy and the *femmes précieuses*. So, arriving at Bex, he cries :

‘ Straight mine eye hath caught new pleasures,  
While the landscape round it measures,  
Russet lawns† and fallows gray,  
Where the nibbling flocks do stray.’ ‡

\* See ‘ Dictionnaire historique du Canton de Vaud,’ par Martignier et de Crousaz, p. 87.

† Lawns=open places, *clairières*.

‡ The arms of the village of Bex show that there were formerly flocks of sheep; the inhabitants still call themselves *Bélerins*, from *bêler*, to bleat.

All this is seen from Bex ; the panorama is magnificent, and above these ‘russet lawns’ and ‘fallows gray’ the clouds rest on the barren rocks of the Dent du Midi :

‘Mountains, on whose barren breast,  
The labouring clouds do often rest ;  
Meadows trim, with daisies pied,  
Shallow brooks and rivers wide.’

But the crowning point of all is the picture of the round wooded hill, where, among clustering chestnut-trees, the battlements of the old tower are seen :

‘Towers and battlements it sees,  
Bosom’d high in tufted trees,  
Where perhaps some beauty lies,\*  
The cynosure of neighbouring eyes.’†

\* Allusion, perhaps, to the Dame d’Aigremont.

† Milton, who was not in the habit of ‘doing’ places with his Baedecker, but, good linguist as he was, of conversing with the men he met, may easily have heard this old legend of the opposite valley, which the feasts of the Mi-été would have passed from mouth to mouth. Aigremont, Duin, and St. Triphon, as we have already said, p. 26, note, were burnt at the same time by the Bernese (see ‘La Vallée des Ormonts,’ par E. Busset, prof., et E. de la Harpe, pasteur, p. 72).

Monsieur Eug. Corthésy, of Moudon, has kindly given us the proof-sheets of his *thèse* on this subject. In his conscientious study, we learn that one night the Lady Eleonore was besieged in her castle, in ‘the absence of her lord, the Seigneur of Pontverre. The peasants, who loved their chatelaine, arrived from La Forclaz, and delivered the no’ole and beautiful lady from imminent danger. She rewarded them by the pasture-land of Perche (you pass it returning from the Lac de Chavonnes to Les Ormonts, but you may easily get lost in the woods), on condition that the women should have their share with the men. This tradition is put in practice, or, at least, was general in the last century.

The researches of Monsieur Corthésy have not discovered any text that lends an appearance of reality to this legend. Popular imagination has invested the Dame d’Aigremont with a halo of youth, grace, and beauty — and this is all we need. The men of Bex that Milton saw would not ignore the graceful story. They met the inhabitants of La Forclaz and of Les Ormonts at the mid-summer fêtes at Taveyannaz or Chavonnes ‘from time immemorial.’ Is it not written in the book of the Doyen Bridel? ‘Si vous voutez rêver de châtelaines, de beaux pages, de seigneurs jaloux, allez à la tour de Duin et faites vous en raconter les légendes.’—Rambert, p. 31.

After naming Zephyr and Aurora, Orpheus and Eurydice, the secret shades

‘Of woody Ida’s inmost grove,’

the poet would shock the ladies of l’Hôtel Rambouillet if he were to name persons and places contemporaneous or common. Milton can but paint ‘lantskips,’ as he so well knows how to do, of the lovely or terrible places he passed, and portraits of the learned or charming persons he met. Even Chaucer and Spenser are baptized after a fashion more agreeable to the circle of his Paris friends (*Il Penseroso*, lines 109 and 116).

Corydon and Thyrsis, the rival singers of the *Eclogues*, now come forward to represent the peasants of Bex, in harvest-time or haymaking, eating what is not much used in England—more’s the pity!—the good vegetable soup so appreciated on the Continent :

‘Hard by, a cottage chimney smokes,  
From betwixt two aged oaks,  
Where Corydon and Thyris met,  
Are at their savoury dinner set  
Of herbs, and other country messes,  
Which the neat-handed Phillis dresses;  
And then, in haste, her bower she leaves  
With Thestylis\* to bind the sheaves.’

A publication much appreciated by old families of the Canton de Vaud is ‘Le Conservateur Suisse,’ by the Doyen Bridel, a very accomplished scholar and observer of men. He was Pastor at Montreux in 1799. All the long valley of Les Ormonts, going from Aigle to the Pillon Pass, he knew in detail, before even the road was decided which is now so much used to get to Gsteig and Thun.

\* ‘Thestylis is bruising for the reapers, o’erspent by the scorching heat, garlic and wild thyme, savoury herbs’: Eclogue ii. 8 Virgil; Phyllis, Eclogue iii.

Now we are at a loss to imagine what idea is conveyed to the English mind by these words :

'The upland hamlets will invite.'

Dean Bridel gives a graphic picture of the Mi-été, a feast celebrated in several mountain places above Aigle and Bex, who in turn 'invite' the others.\* He calls it the Mi-Tsautein or Mi-chaud-temps. Here is the description of one of these mid-summer feasts :

'On a pretty flat meadow which looks down on the Lac Lagot stands a rock in the shape of a pulpit. Here and there natural stone benches, rising from the grass, offer comfortable seats. This place is the *plan*, or level, for the country dances which have taken place in our Alps from time immemorial. At the Mi-Tsautein (Mi-été) all the youth of the neighbouring villages resort to the mountains, where their cows feed during the summer months, with their musical instruments ("rebecks," according to Milton). Pack-horses bring the wine and provisions. The fête, which begins with a religious service, lasts from morning till evening

(“Till the livelong daylight fail”),

especially if the weather is fine and no storms are apprehended for the night.'

But in the year when Dean Bridel wrote this, the Municipalities of the Aigle district had forbidden the villagers to bring up any wine on the Sunday of the Mi-été, as the drinking and late hours had caused some scandal.

'Consequently,' he observes sadly, 'there was no dance, because there was no music; for the votaries of Apollo avoid carefully places where the gifts of Bacchus are banished. If I were younger, I should regret the sup-

\* On these occasions the cowherds make out their accounts as to the sale of cattle and produce of the milk.

pression of these Alpine festivals, consecrated as they are by ancient custom ; they form a very essential feature of those national habits which it is important to maintain.'

' To return from Brettaïe,' he continues—and this shows how the description applies to Bex and its environs on the Simplon road—'we descend by the hamlet of La Forclaz, on the valley of Ormonts Dessous (*Le Sépey*), and on Bex by the mountain of Ensce, where there is an Alpine village of more than ninety chalets, and thence to Taveyannaz' (the classical ground of the Mi-été) ' where sixty-five chalets are arranged in seven lines ' (see p. 259 of the ' Conservateur Suisse ').

Doyen Bridel thought a few policemen would be all that was necessary to avoid the scandals of the Mi-été. Had he lived now, he would be inclined to repress these feasts altogether, as they do much in demoralizing the people.

Here is Milton's description of the Mi-été :

' Sometimes with *secure* delight '

—the bulls are shut up in the stable on these occasions—

' The upland hamlets will invite,  
When the merry bells ring round,  
And the jocund rebecks \* sound,  
To many a youth and many a maid,  
Dancing in the chequered shade,  
And young and old come forth to play  
On a sunshine holiday,  
Till the livelong daylight fail.'

The following lines, by Juste Olivier, the poet of the Vaudois Alps, are still sung at these summer feasts :

\* 'Rebec : a French word. Originally it had two strings, then three, till exalted into the more perfect violin with four strings. It is thought to have been a Moorish instrument ' (Webster). The 'oaken flute' is forgotten here (*Lycidas*).

' Nous autres montagnards  
 Avons aussi nos fêtes,  
 Le ciel bleu sur nos têtes,  
 Forts de nos fiers remparts,  
 Nous autres montagnards.

' Ainsi nous de Gryon  
 Dansons à Taveyannaz,  
 Comme ceux de Lausanne  
 Dansent à Montbenon,  
 Ainsi nous de Gryon.'

That Milton met with Swiss Fairy Lore in the conversation of the peasants of Bex, we may conclude by his lines on the lubber fiend or goblin household drudge, in French *Le Servant* or *Le Vouivre*. It is true that this fellow is not unlike his cousin, the Scotch Brownie, Lob-lie-by-the-Fire,\* but he is placed here in the upland hamlets, where the cream-bowl is set by night on the window-sill as guerdon for his pains.

Some seventy years ago, the old women of Les Ormonts would tell you, if you gained their confidence and understood their patois, of the unseen haunters of their chalets. Woe to the niggardly cowherd who should neglect to provide for their needs ; all his cattle would fall into the precipice as they went to the watering. These Good People hid and found objects with malicious intent, dogging the footsteps of the mountaineer, with good or evil omen, all his days.

After the dance and the spicy beverage of the twilight hour, the peasants begin their stories of the invisible—how fairy Mab ate the junkets,† how the wife was pulled and pinched by invisible hands. The husband calls to mind the wonderful night in which the goblin had threshed for him

\* See 'Lob-lie-by-the-Fire,' by Juliana Horatia Ewing. London : George Bell.

† Juncate, according to Webster : French, *jonchée*, cream-cheese, made in a wicker basket ; from the Latin *juncus*, a reed. It is used elsewhere by Milton to indicate any kind of delicate food.

more corn than ten paid labourers would have done, in order to earn his dish of cream ; the wood fire was still flickering, and his form could almost be discerned as, crop-full, he stretched before the hearth ; yet at earliest dawn he had fled.

' And crop-full, out of door he flings,  
Ere the first cock his matin rings.  
Thus done the tales, to bed they creep,  
By whispering winds soon lulled asleep.'

Here we must quote Doyen Bridel once more : ' I call Brettaë the Valley of the Four Lakes. It is a very romantic country, where the imagination roves at will, and which she peoples with fantastic scenes so soon created by waters, forests, winds, silence, solitude, and the mysterious shades of night. Do not be surprised, my friend '—Dean Bridel has chosen the form of a letter—'that superstition, which seems to prefer the mountain to the plain, has also her word to say. Let us listen to her for a few moments, for, if she is not always instructive, she has at least the power to amuse.' (Hence her presence in *L'Allegro*.) ' Such and such a shepherd affirms that he has seen on the *Lac Serrai* a dragon covered with white feathers, beating the water with his wings.'

Fairies are also much in credit in this part of the Alps. They have their ballroom, their rock, their den, their fountain, their resting-place. Once upon a time they were friendly to the young shepherds, whom they conducted to their underground haunts. Some even married them clandestinely, and informed them of hidden treasures and the virtues of plants. They were not unlike the girls of the place, except that their skin was black and their feet without heels, and their hair was so long and thick as to serve them as a mantle. The brutality of one of these shepherd-husbands, who tried to beat the fairy with his *débattoir*, caused her to retreat with her sisters. They fled in search

of a country where husbands are more courteous. Since that time no more fairies have been seen, '*mais à la veillée et au colter on en parle volontiers*' (but sitting up late and in their familiar meetings the villagers like to talk of them).

'Then to the spicy nut-brown ale,  
With stories told of many afeat,  
How fairy Mab the junkets eat,  
She was pinch'd and pull'd, she said ;  
And he, by friar's lantern led,  
Tells how the drudging goblin sweat  
To earn his cream-bowl duly set,  
When in one night, ere glimpse of morn,  
His shadowy flail hath threshed the corn  
That ten day-labourers could not end.'

A friend wrote two years ago to the author : 'Would it not add further point to your subject to show that Fairy Mab, the friar's lantern and the drudging goblin have all their existence among the peasantry of the valley of the Rhone ?' In this point, as in others, we can only be suggestive, not exhaustive. Similar legends are known in Russia and elsewhere.

Milton went by the Leman to Geneva, where he spent two weeks with the Protestants and had talks with the uncle of his friend Diodati. How much he would have to tell them about the tyranny of the Inquisition, and the struggle for religious liberty which called him back to England !

Before starting he had written *Lycidas* ; on his return he wrote, with still deeper regret, *Epitaphium Damonis* (Diodati was Damon), deplored his *whim* in choosing the Alpine passes and glaciers.

Two other lines of the same poem, though no proof of our theme, are interesting as recalling his recent visit to Galileo. Speaking of himself, he says :

‘for then that shepherd was absent,  
Kept by the Muse’s sweet love in the far-famed tower of the  
Tuscan.’

A noteworthy fact is that, on his return, he found *Lycidas* and *Comus* published. Had the Twin Poems been written before his tour, would they not have been published also? They did not find a place in Milton's MS. book called *Jottings of Subjects*. Milton's strong personality has become so absorbing an interest from his time to our own, in politics, dogma and epic poetry, that these minor poems, written just before he threw himself into the struggles for his country's freedom, have been left on one side, graceful enigmas but one quarter deciphered, although honoured by a sort of liturgical cult.

## CHAPTER V

### DOES THE KEY FIT?

THE rare volume of *Poemata*; or, *Poems of John Milton, both Latin and English, composed at Several Times, printed by his True Copies*, may be seen in the Library at Guildhall.

It is quite to the point to quote here the preface of Moseley ‘the Stationer’ to the Reader: ‘It is not any private respect of gain, gentle Reader, for the slightest pamphlet is nowadayes more vendable then the works of learnedest men; but it is the love I have to our own Language that hath made me diligent to collect and set forth such peeces both in Prose and Verse, so as may renew the wonted esteem of our English tongue. . . . That encouragement I have received from the most ingenious men in their clear and courteous entertainment of Mr. Waller’s late choice Peeces hath once more made me adventure into the World, presenting it with these ever-green and not to be blasted laurels. The Author’s more peculiar excellence in these studies was too well known to conceal his Papers or to keep me from attempting to solicit them from him.’

These words show that Milton did not publish himself the volume of *Poemata* which contains the Twins, and consequently the order in which the contents of the book are placed can hardly have any chronological significance.

His *Defence against Smectymnuus, Divorce, and Aeropagitica*, all appeared before 1645.\*

Professor David Masson writes beautifully : ‘Word follows word, and clause fits into clause, in Milton’s verse, with a precision and a neatness not usual even among the most careful of the Spenserians, and proving the severity of his understanding in respect of what he himself wrote.’ This is exactly what we maintain. We saw through a glass darkly, but now face to face ; the glass is changed into a microscope, revealing the fine mosaic, in which everything fits into its proper place.

‘So far as the scenery in the *Allegro* and *Pensero* is taken from any one place,’ continues Dr. Masson, ‘the credit may be given to Horton and its neighbourhood ; “the towers and battlements” are almost evidently Windsor Castle !’

‘That Milton did not adhere to local truth of detail’—he continues—‘is seen from his

‘... Mountains on whose barren breast  
The labouring clouds do often rest.’”

Now, should our love of merry England make us worse *chauvins* than the French ?

The impartial reader will probably allow that these words,

\* It may interest those who do not know the little volume of the *Poemata* to see the list of the contents :

1. Hymn to the Nativity. 2. Paraphrase of Ps. civ., cxxxvi.
3. The Passion. 4. On Time. 5. On the Circumcision. 6. At a Solemn Music. 7. The Epitaph of the Marchioness of Winchester.
8. Song on May Morning. 9. On Shakespeare (dated 1630). 10. On the University Carrier. 11. Another on the Same. 12. L’Allegro.
13. Il Pensero. 14. Sonnets : O Nightingale ; Italian Sonnets ; Sonnet VII. : How soon hath time, the subtle thief of youth ; VIII. Captain or Colonel ; IX. Lady that in the prime, etc. 15. Arcades. 16. Lycidas. 17. A Mask : Ludlow Castle. Comus. Joannis Miltoni Londinensis Poemata. Quorum pleraque intra annum aetatis vigesimum conscript. Nunc primum edita 1645. Ad Leonoram Romæ canentem. Sylvarum Liber.

though they do not apply to Horton or Windsor, are most Miltonic in ‘local truth of detail’ when taken as simply descriptive of the poet’s return journey by the Simplon, when he saw the clouds stretching across the green valley of the Rhone, from the barren breast of the Dent du Midi to the giddy heights of Morcles ; do we not find below them the hill of the TOUR DE DUIN, where old battlements nestle among the tuft-like chestnut-trees of Bex, overlooking the ‘wide’ Rhone ?

‘So in the *Penseroso*,’ says Dr. Masson, ‘the sound of the distant roaring of the sea is, as regards any part of Buckinghamshire, equally ideal.’ But, we venture to reply, at the time these poems were written, Milton had at any rate heard the voice of the sea at Genoa and at Nice.

Professor Raleigh, in his erudite book on Milton, says nothing that would not harmonize perfectly with our explanation of *L’Allegro* and *Il Penseroso*.

He tells us how the rising tide of political passion submerged the Arcadia of the poet’s early fancies, so that the very subjects of his later writings are dictated by polemics.

These poems, then, mark precisely the TURNING-POINT between his early lyric poetry and his more sober career of struggle and disappointment.

Well might he pause before leaving Fairy Land, well might he assemble in one poem all the laughing images to which he meant to say a sad farewell, and turn his steps resolutely towards duty, however melancholy the prospect ! He felt he ought not to abandon, in a crisis of so much danger, his country and his fellow-Christians ; he saw that a way was opening for the establishment of real liberty, and that the foundation was being laid for the deliverance of mankind from the yoke of slavery and superstition ; and he did not hesitate to sacrifice, in the cause of the Liberty of the Press, his very eyesight.

With such thoughts in his heart, the poet returns to London.

Here we take up with pleasure Dr. Masson's words, and heartily echo them : 'Do we not see him ? *There, during his brief breathing-time of peace and poetic scheming before the great interruption came?* There, through the winter of 1639-40, he sits among his books and papers, in his lodgings at St. Bride's Churchyard, his two boy-nephews occasionally with him, the bustle of Fleet Street and Ludgate Hill well shut out, or only at night the not unpleasant melancholy of the wintry London gusts mingling with the quiet warmth within. *The very thoughts that then made up Milton's musings are known to us,* and we can see the books that were on his table. *His thoughts were of the Italian scenes and friends so recently left,* and yet bright in his memory.\*

It seems that Dr. Masson's words are becoming truer than ever.† We wish to ask competent critics whether, out of those very thoughts, in those winter nights, Milton may not have been working out these exquisite antiphonal poems, where the names of Galileo, of Leonora, of Maria Celeste, of Geneviève de Bourbon, of Frescobaldi, of Michael Angelo, are, to our eyes, for ever embossed as in a golden shrine, consecrated to all the sciences and to all the arts.

Coming from the flat scenery of England to Italy, passing from the broad valley of Domodossola, by the terrors of Gondo, to the laughing valley of the Rhone, the ideas of Melancholy and of Mirth became, in the mind of the poet, as centres around which the images of his travels, and of his former experience in England, too, gradually

\* We italicize.

† In the Preface to Dr. Masson's delightful work we read that some errors are contained in it which will never be discovered, and others that may be. We have perhaps found one. Only the deepest respect for truth and for Milton has induced us to point it out, if such it is.

clustered. Which is the fairer, the sad or the mirthful mood, it is hard to say. There is a pleasure in melancholy, there is a looking backward on past sorrow which has a real and living charm. The Andante of Beethoven is sweeter than his Allegro, but, oh! the charm of the quicker movement, as it bears you along! So the poem *Il Penseroso* must needs begin by decrying the foolish joys of mirth, and *L'Allegro* must set its bright form in relief by the 'ebon shades and low-browed rocks' where 'loathed Melancholy' first saw twilight. Yet Melancholy has sublime companions—Peace, Quiet, Fast, Leisure, Contemplation—who meet by moonlight under the chequered shade of the oak, listening to the nightingale, just as those others, the merry ones, met under the chequered shade of the 'upland hamlets,' dancing to the sound of the rebeck at the Mi-été.

'The moanings of the homeless sea,' as Tennyson would put it, the swinging of the curfew, the winter firelight, images all well in keeping, succeed each other; the form of Galileo, great and sad; Tragedy, especially ancient, divine; Orpheus, Chaucer, Spenser, follow suit; the droppings of rain at night, the solitary wide wood with dreams and weird music; next the cloister, the dim cathedral with its coloured windows, story upon story, and the ecstatic organ and anthems.

But the image of Galileo returns as one of supreme melancholy; to be like him, to sit in quiet retirement, learning out of Nature's book the laws of astronomy and biology,

'Till old experience do attain  
To something like prophetic strain,'

is the *summum bonum* of *Il Penseroso*.

'These pleasures, Melancholy, give,  
And I with thee will choose to live.'

*L'Allegro* recalls the scenes of Chantilly, Venus, Bacchus and the Graces, with all the pranks of unreined Fancy.

Smiles and Nods, Sport and Laughter, come dancing along with *L'Allegro*, who leads Liberty, the mountain nymph, in her right hand—sweet Liberty so beloved by Milton. In sooth, he will be of their party, if not unworthy to live unreproved in their graceful company. Then follow in the poem the happy English scenes, simple and blithe; then the ‘new pleasures’ of mountainous Switzerland, with its many streams and precipitous torrents, where persons from Virgil’s Elogues meet over vegetable soup to rejoice in the hayfield or the harvest-home. The Mi-tsautein in the ‘upland hamlets,’ halfway up the giant sides of some snow-capped entity, where the air is cooler, is a merry thought indeed, and the superstitious stories, which some take seriously, are another source of amusement.

But, thanks to Madame de Longueville, whose sweet and brilliant image is engraved on Milton’s young imagination, the crowning scene is not in the country, but in the ‘tower’d cities.’

The throngs of knights and barons bold, heroes of the Thirty Years’ War, cluster before his memory, not in armour, but in the peaceful livery of learned Rambouillet, ‘with store of ladies,’ whose favours are the greatest recompense to the warrior as to the tragedian. Shakespeare’s comedies are here invoked, and Jonson’s wit. Music must again envelop all; let it be, this time, the vocal music of Leonora ‘warbling active,’ making mortal hearts accustomed to immortal and inimortalizing sound:

‘That Orpheus’ self may heave his head  
From golden slumber on a bed  
Of heap’d Elysian flowers, and hear  
Such strains as would have won the ear  
Of Pluto, to have quite set free  
His half-regain’d Eurydice.’

If this short essay be taken in the same good faith in which it is offered, and examined with the same honesty as

has been invariably used in working out the conclusions arrived at, our labour will not have been in vain. So much has the beauty of these poems been enhanced by the thought that they allude, in so large a measure, to Milton's travels, and so much have the places where he stayed gained in interest, that the writer feels bound to gladden others by the discovery.

THE END









**DATE DUE / DATE DE RETOUR**

NOV 18 2000

MAY 22 2001

MAY 23 2001

PR 3584 .B8  
Byse, Fanny Lee, b. 1849.  
Milton on the continent : a ke

010101 000



0 1999 0011538 7  
TRENT UNIVERSITY

PR3584 .B8  
Byse, Mrs. Fanny (Lee)  
Milton on the continent

DATE	ISSUED TO
	87566

87566

